AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus which acquires ~~code~~ coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium recording hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the apparatus comprising:

an input interface which receives ~~received~~ signals from an external recording medium;

an image input controller which acquires the ~~code~~ coded data by said input interface first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images;

a decoder which decodes the ~~code~~ coded data acquired by said image input controller; and

a storage device which stores data decoded by said decoder.

2. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

3. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim **[[1]]** 2, wherein said input controller acquires the ~~code~~ coded data first only at

a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

4. (Original) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a print engine which prints an image based on data decoded by said decoder.

5. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an index maker which makes an index image **[[**on**]]** of the plurality of images based on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

a print engine which prints the index image received from said index maker;

an operational device which instructs to make an index to said index maker; and

a controller which allows to activate said index maker when instructed by said operational device after data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

6. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said image input controller continues to receive data at higher levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data at the ~~a~~ low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

7. (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a display device which displays a state of data acquisition of the ~~code~~ coded data divided by levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.

8. (Original) The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a print engine which prints the index image received from said index make.

9. (Currently Amended) An image processing method for acquiring ~~code~~ coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium which records hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the method comprising the steps of:

acquiring the ~~code~~ coded data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images; and

decoding the ~~code~~ coded data acquired from the external recording medium.

10. (Original) The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

11. (Currently Amended) The image processing method according to claim **[[9]]** 10, wherein the ~~code~~ coded data is acquired first only at a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

12. (Original) The image processing method according to claim 9, further comprising:

making an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index; and

activating the step of making the index image when instructed by the user after data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

13. (Original) The image processing method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of acquiring data at high level of the unit of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

14. (Currently Amended) The image processing method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of displaying a state of data acquisition of the ~~code~~ coded data divided by levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.

15. (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium which records an image processing program for acquiring ~~code~~ coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium which records hierarchically encoded

data of the plurality of images in the unit of hierarchically encoding, the program comprising the steps of:

acquiring the ~~code~~ coded data first only at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images; and

decoding the ~~code~~ coded data acquired from the external recording medium.

16. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 15, wherein the low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

17. (Currently Amended) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 16 **[[15]]**, wherein the ~~code~~ coded data is acquired first only at a plurality of levels including the lowest level of the unit of hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images.

18. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 15, the program further comprising the steps of:

making an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index; and

activating the step of making the index image when instructed by the user after data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

19. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of acquiring data at high level of the unit of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images, after the data acquisition of the data at a low level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

20. (Original) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying that an image can be printed after data at the high level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is acquired for the image, and of outputting the image based on the data acquired on the image when instructed by a user.

21. (Currently Amended) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying a state of data acquisition of the ~~code~~ coded data divided by levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.

22. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the coded data is compressed data.

23. (New) The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the coded data is compressed data.

24. (New) The computer readable recording medium according to claim 15, wherein the coded data is compressed data.